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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

TRANSCRIPT OF THE SPECIAL BRIEFING
ON THE GUYANA SITUATION

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1978
12:15 P.M.

(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

MR. BUSHNELL: I guess I should first bring you up to date on what we have learned and what has been happening in Guyana since we last met yesterday afternoon.

Last evening following his return to Georgetown from spending the day up country in Jonestown working with the Guyanese police and security forces, Vic Dikeos, who is normally our Deputy Chief of Mission in Panama but who is temporarily in Guyana as the Acting DCM since our DCM there was wounded on Saturday --

Q Could you spell it?

A D-I-K-O-S, I believe.

Q E-O-S.

A E-O-S.

-- "gave me a briefing by phone of what he had observed, and I might pass the key elements of that on to you.

At the time that he left just at dark from Jonestown last night they had counted 405 bodies. I know that there are some reports in the press that have slightly different numbers. I think that is not a particularly firm count. Through the course of the afternoon they were still finding additional bodies, and presumably the figure will increase as they are able to explore the area more thoroughly.

We don't have any indication and I don't want to suggest that there will be a major increase, but that is still a situation which is not fully resolved.

Of these bodies roughly a quarter, about 100, were children.

The overwhelming majority have no external signs of trauma and the presumption and the reports were that these people died of poison. A small number, including the leader, Bishop Jones, there were bullet shot wounds and that was the apparent cause of death.

They had not, I should stress, performed autopsies or arrived at any definitive sort of conclusion on that element. That is work that is continuing at this time.

In addition, during the course of the day yesterday fourteen residents of Jonestown came in from the jungle, People who had fled into the jungle Saturday when these events Saturday afternoon happened. They came back into Jonestown either completely on their own volition and their own motivation or because the Guyanese police had reached them somewhere in the surrounding area and had helped them back in.

Of the fourteen, four were children, two of the children were wounded and were evacuated last night to Georgetown. The preliminary indication is that the wounds are not serious.

The survivors who came back in, together with some residents of the area and the police, have managed thus far to give at least a preliminary identification to about half of the deceased on the ground there in Jonestown.

We are continuing to move in as rapidly as we can our support for the Guyanese police in their efforts on all the aspects of this situation. However, it will be tomorrow morning before we have in the full amounts of equipment, particularly helicopters that we hope to provide. So we are still rather light on the ground.

At dirst daylight this mornlng a light plane arrived from Panama that will be used to shuttle our people from Georgetown up-country. Through the course of the morning three or four additional aircraft have arrived with a crane to assemble helicopters with two helicopters on board. It will take us a few hours to get them operational.

During the next 24 hours additional helicopters will be flown in disassembled. We now have airborne over the Caribbean three HH-53 helicopters. These are the great big Chinook helicopters. They have airborne refueling capacity, and they will be arriving at first light tomorrow morning.

It is a twenty-hour flight from Florida Elgin Air Force Base, which they have departed from, to Georgetown.

Until we get particularly these heavy helicopters on the ground, the actual transport ability in Guyana is very severely limited. There are only a few light planes available for moving people up-country or potentially for bringing bodies out of the area. So there has not yet been any attempt to move bodies, and I will come to that situation in a minute.

Because of the shortage of transportation and the weight of the radio equipment which we had hoped to move to Jonestown yesterday, that was not moved in order to give priority to moving up-country people that were particularly Guyanese police officials who were needed in Jonesville. As soon as we get our helicopters operating, and perhaps even before, we will have that moved up, which will improve our communications.

We have a Consular Officer who has stayed in Jonestown overnight. We have additional Consular Officers who have moved up there this morning and who will be working with the Guyanese in the identification, in the inventorying and controlling the personal effects of the individuals and other normal consular functions.

The Guyanese security officials have continued to pursue their investigation of this matter. A small number of people have been detained. They have, of course, interviewed, as I am sure members of the press have judging by the coverage today, the survivors, both those in Georgetown and those on the scene in Jonestown.

Q Has anyone been arrested by the Guyanese?

A There are some people who have been detained. I believe in their system that the first step until a court actually hands down a formal charge they are not arrested and charged with a particular crime. But they have been detained for investigation in connection with both the series of incidents on the ground and with the incidents at Jonestown itself.

Q Do you know the number?

A Before I turn to questions, let me go on and deal with one additional situation here.

We have on the basis of the reports which we have received from our people on the ground -- we have an obviously rather appalling situation. Remembering that t is is a tropical climate, we have bodies which have now been out in the open in the sun and the rain. There have continued to be very strong rain showers every day for over 72 hours. There are major problems with insects and the bodies are already becoming very hard to identify.

Because of this we have reviewed this situation and have authorized our Ambassador in connection with the Guyanese authorities that if the Guyanese authorities recommend on the basis of the health conditions in Jonestown -- and I would say that it looks as though they may be doing that -- they may, in fact, as of this moment already have done it -- that they may begin to inter these bodies locally.

Prior to burial every effort is and will be made to positively identify all the dead and to arrange for a proper, decent burial and grave site with individual markers.

As I said, about half the victims have so far been identified.

This would not have been, if we had had our choice, the route that I think we would have followed, but at this point the course of events and the fact that we have very limited transportation forces us into it.

Moreover, the fact that some people, including children, have been coming out of the jungle suggests the possibility at least that we may have survivors who have gone through a very harrowing experience, who are very much afraid, and are still in the jungle; and we feel that we need to give the first priority with the available transportation to the search and rescue operation for these people who we would hope would still be alive, both in terms of using heavy-lift capacity to move additional Guyanese people into the area and to support them and in terms of using the light choppers, some of which will be equipped with loud speakers and so forth for the actual search and rescue operation.

So that, on the one hand, we have decided that the course of events forces us to give that priority and the health situation leaves us no choice but to go along with a decision of the Guyanese authorities to begin interring these people in the site.

We will make every effort to identify them. We do have airborne at this moment a DOD, Department of Defense team, called a Graves Identification Unit, people who are experienced with identification and the handling of bodies, who will be moved into Jonestown as quickly as possible to assist the Guyanese with this task.

I think that essentially completes the update of the situation, and I can turn to questions.

Q Can we have a list of the casualties that have been identified, of the people that have been identified?

A We will as we get this information. Our Consular people in the task force have this available. We will not provide under the Privacy Act these lists to the press. Those who have friends and relatives have been calling in, will continue to call in. We will make every effort to notify next of kin, but it is not appropriate for us to put this out certainly until we have been able to notify the next of kin very widely and there are some problems in locating some next of kin in some cases.

But we are notifying as we get the information both the families of survivors and of deceased, as we get that information.

Q Mr. Bushnell, could you tell me whether it is apparent yet whether Mr. Jones' bullet wounds were self-inflicted or not?

A I think before I say anything on that I should allow the medical examiners to make their examination. Some people who have been in the area have suggested that it is. But until there is actually an official determinatlon on that, I would only say that the indications from the people on the ground certainly suggest that that is a possibility; that it is not ruled out.

Q What the other question I had is how quickly will the gravediggers be there or the grave people? When are they expected to arrive?

A The first members of that team will be arriving in Georgetown late this afternoon or early this evening and will be moved as soon as we can up to Jonestown. The remainder will be in over the course of the night.

Q What information do you have from the Guyanese police about the possibility of murders occurring in the bush, those who escaped being shot?

A At this point we have no information from the Guyanese police. They have not, to my knowledge anyway, identified any bodies in the bush who are shot. That is not to say that they have completed their work on this. What we will find as that continues is uncertain.

But at this point we do not have a report from them that would indicate that there are people who have been shot in the bush.

Q A two-part question:

Since there are reports that Guyana received sixty letters of recommendations that they admit the Reverend Jim Jones to Guyana, these letters coming from a number of prominent Democrats, including the First Lady and the Vice President, will the Carter Administration apologize to Guyana for recommending this homicidal maniac, or do you people feel no responsibility in this regard?

A I must say that there seems to have been or there was an immense amount of mail of all sorts on all sides of the issue of the Peoples Temple in Guyana.

When the Peoples Temple went to Guyana they were asked, as I think we would find normal under the laws of most countries, under the laws of Guyana, to provide indications of their history, what they were about. They provided a large number of letters of recommendation, which I gather are a part of the official record available to the public in Guyana, as a basis for making their settlement in that country.

I don't think it is appropriate from the State Department podium to make any particular comment on any of the specific letters, some of which I gather members of the press have now seen in the public records of Guyana.

Q Could I follow that up, sir, by citing contrary to reports in Washington's daily newspapers, that Jones was first exposed in 1971. Here are three page-one stories in the San Francisco Examiner of September of 1972 which expose Jones as having been

investigated by State authorities in Indiana, having armed his followers with 357 Magnums, having claimed to resurrect the dead, 43 cases, and having been identified in print and orally as divine.

My question is: If Mrs. Carter and Mr. Mondale were ignorant of this, does the Carter Administration believe that the California Democrats, such as Mosconi and Congressman Burton, were also innocent of this information?

A I have no way to answer that question, as you know, and don't want to get into a discussion of that aspect. I think it is the normal procedure when Governments go overseas -- when groups such as the Peoples Temple go overseas, they present their case to the local government. That is a matter largely between them and the local government, not between government-to-government basis.

Q When they have the Vice President of the United States endorsing them? You think that is a personal matter, sir, and no responsibility

In other words, you don't feel, as a member of the Carter Administration, any responsibility for having endorsed this man?

A For having endorsed this many in which way?

Q Yes.

The Vice President of the United States, Walter Mondale, wrote a letter of endorsement. So did Mrs. Jimmy Carter. That is fairly high up in the Carter Administration. They endorsed this guy, despite the fact that he had been exposed in San Francisco and in Minneapolis.

A Well, I think this is a question you would have to raise with them.

Q I will.

A I think it is clear from what you are saying that these letters were not written while they are in their present positions. These are letters that were written at some time in the past.

Q When?

A I would say that from the State Department that we have had a very large amount of mail on both sides of the issue, as we have discussed in previous Press Conferences here. We have had a lot of mail that has been critical of the Peoples Temple. We have had an even larger amount of mail which has had very good things to say about the Peoples Temple and, in fact, has said explicitly that many of the allegations being made were not true.

Q Mr. Bushnell, on this subject of correspondence, have you been able to find out yet what reply the State Department made to the May 10 letter from a number of parents or to the April 19 letters?

A I have now read the letter that you referred to yesterday in which it was asked that we communicate certain concerns of a number of parents to the Prime Minister of Guyana. I have confirmed that we did communicate those concerns, in fact, by passing a copy of that letter to the Government of Guyana.

I have not yet -- actually I have asked my people to find out, and they have not yet found the actual response saying that we had done that. I assume that that request was made of us. The request was carried out. And a letter was sent saying so, although I have not found a copy of that in the files yet.

Q A follow-up please.

You haven't found the response any of those State Department officials made to those parents though; is that correct?

A The request which we received was to pass to the Government of Guyana a memo, as I recall it, a document from a number of concerned parents. We did what was requested in that. We passed that to the Government of Guyana.

It was also asked in the letter that when we had done so that we let them know. I believe that that was done, but I have not yet found a copy of the letter or letters in which it is said that we have done that.

Q Did we pass it without comment, sir, without American State Department comment?

A I believe that when we passed this letter we explained what it was, how it came to our attention, and indicated what generally was the nature of the people that had signed that letter.

Q One clarification.

You have about 200 bodies identified. You will begin burying them and those graves will be identified. This is at the settlement site.

Will those victims later be disinterred and returned to the United States at no cost to the next of kin?

A Well, of course, we are still in the initial stages of this and I think we will have to sort some of these things out later. It would be my general understanding that the law of Guyana would permit after a certain period the disinterment of these people; that there is no facility, no financing available for the U.S. Government for that. It would have to be at private expense.

Q Do you have an estimate of the number of people who may have fled who survived who were out there in the jungle?

A We do not have any estimate of that. We did find -- the Guyanese police found a group of something between 800 and 900 passports in a trunk in Jonesville, presumably since the policy in the settlements seem to be to turn in the passports for central holding. These presumably represented passports of people that were there, at least there at one time.

A number of these passports are quite old. They are the old style passports that haven't been issued for a while. So I am not sure until we have done more work and looked through them. There may be duplication in these passports. There may be passports there of people that left the colony a long time ago.

So that, we do not have any number of how many were there and, therefore, how many are unaccounted for.

The fact that a number of people ran into the jungle, some of those people, a small number, have now come back, suggest that there still may be some at least people in the jungle and that is why we feel that the highest priority, because of the very rugged conditions which they are suffering under, is to use our resources and the Guyanese police resources in order to try to reach these people and bring them out.

Q Mr. Bushnell, do you have a figure on the total number of visits by Consular Officers since this began, since the Department's attention was called to this feeling on the part of their relatives here?

Can you tell us how many such visits by Consular Officers took place? And do you have any explanation for the fact that apparently they never discovered anyone who wanted to leave?

A Let me go into that a little bit.

As I said yesterday, we have made four Consular visits in 1978. There were some additional visits made in '77.

Q Four in 1977?

A Four in 1978. I gave the months of that in the briefing yesterday afternoon.

I did now talk to the officer who made some of these visits and given the interest in this, I think I might explain a little bit more about what he has told me because I think it is germain to the questions that some of you are asking.

I asked him what were the physical circumstances of these private interviews. He tells me that he conducted these private interviews in an open field at a distance from any buildings and with unimpeded vision in all directions. Just the Consular Officer and the individual.

I asked him were these interviews conducted at the request of the Consular Officer or that of the person interviewed. He said that in every case they were conducted at the request of the Consular Officer based on the request from friends and relatives, such as through the letters which have been mentioned here.

I asked did the interviewee, the person being interviewed, complain of or support allegations of physical, mental or sexual abuse by the Reverend Jones or other members of the Peoples Temple. In all cases the answer was "no".

I asked did any of those interviewed indicate a desire to escape from or otherwise leave Jonestown. The answer is "no". All denied that they were being held against their will or abused in any way.

I told him that I had said to you yesterday that it wasn't really proper for a Consular Officer to put his arm around somebody and escort them of the property. He said, well, he had come fairly close to that

because he had said to many of these people, particularly where friends and relatives had said they were being held against their will, that if they wanted to leave he was prepared to take them then from that field, proceed to his car at the edge of the wheat field in which there was a Guyanese official and leave. None indicated any interest in taking him up on that offer.

This is over some 40 to 50 interviews of this nature conducted over the past year.

Q You said 75.

A There were 75 interviews conducted. Forty to fifty were conducted in this mode in the field. Others were conducted in the facility.

Q Did he make any comment as to the mental state of those people, whether they looked drugged or whether they looked undernourished, or whether they looked afraid?

A He indicated that the general regime -- that there was a lot of menial work, hard work to be done in a tropical climate which the members of this group participated in, but he did not sense that this, that what they were doing was beyond the abilities of the people that were involved in it. I did not ask him specifically if they looked fearful or afraid. I think the general conditions under which he conducted this interview would have tended to have offset fear to the maximum extent that we possibly could have done so. In the back of the room -- give them a chance.

Q I just wanted to get back to the point I raised yesterday because we continue to get information through diplomatic sources from Georgetown that this group is involved in marijuana smuggling. It is our information, again from sources very well placed, that this was part of a larger operation to push Guyana towards actually cultivating marijuana as a cash crop to help them in their debt situation. I'm wondering if since yesterday you have anything further on that?

A I don't have any further information. Our people who have been in the area have not identified any fields of marijuana. I think that we'll have more information once we have more people who travel more widely in the area. But we, at this point, do not have any information indicating that.

Q Mr. Bushnell, why did they take up this mode of going out to the field to interview people? Was it first that they did it in the compound, and for some reason the Consular Officer felt they had to do it out in the field?

A My understanding of this is that some of the letters, at least, received by the State Department or by the Embassy itself indicated that the nature of the pressure on the people was such that they would not, that they would be afraid to be frank with the consular officer, and that therefore, he should do what he could in order to give them a chance to be frank and a chance to leave, and that is the reason that he adopted, with with the full agreement of the authorities in Jonestown, this mode of operation.

Q Mr. Bushnell, I believe I heard you refer to the central figure here as "Bishop" Jones. I wrote it down; I think it's in the transcript. In this connection, I talked yesterday with the headquarters of the Deciples of Christ, Christian Church, in Indianapolis. They have 1.3 million members and is a member of the National Council of Churches. They confirmed that the Reverend Jim Jones is still a clergyman of this large denomi-nation and has not be unfrocked and so forth, and they have no bishops.

I was wondering, has he been consecrated in another denomination or do you have information that makes him a bishop or was that just your terminology or what? Why is he a bishop?

A Various people have referred to him as Bishop Jones, and I guess that I referred to him at some time as that. I tried to refer to him basically as Reverend Jones. I think that is probably the more correct. I don't have any particular evidence that he is a bishop.

Q All right. Thank you.

Q Mr. Bushnell, when the letter was sent to the Guyanese Government from the parents of the Peoples Temple follower who wanted to get their relative out of there, did this government make any recommendations as to how the Guyanese authorities might pursue the matter?

A I don't believe that this government, that the U.S. Government made any recommendations, no. I think that there was an exchange of information bet-

ween our consular officer and between various Guyanese officials of the area and who visited the area in terms of the situation. And as I have said, there was no evidence that has ever been identified by any official American there that there was any violation or any apparent violation of any law of Guyana along the lines of the accusations in this letter.

Q Going back to your meeting with the consular officer, did he tell you whether he ever met with Jones and did he ever report back to the Embassy that there was something which wasn't quite right with this colony, or did he ever make any comment about it at all?

A He certainly met with Reverend Jones. I assume that when the Reverend Jones was there --I don't know that he met with every one of the four cases of the visits this year, but if the Reverend Jones was there, I assume he met with him. He was the acknowledged leader of that group.

As I said yesterday, the Guyanese tradition -- and I think our own tradition -- allows a considerable flexibility to religious organizations, and everybody looked at this, essentially, as a religious organization, and I think we were all reluctant to question the beliefs and practices of other religious organizations, some of which very few of us understand. But that is not considered to be an appropriate line of inquiry for State Department officers so long as they are within the bounds of the laws of our country and of other countries.

Q Mr. Bushnell, it was suggested in some of the press accounts this morning that the large number of firearms that the encampment had, the armed guards had, may have been in violation of Guyanese law. Can you confirm that, first? And, second, do you have any information whether they smuggled firearms in or do you have any information as to how they got all those firearms in there?

A I don't have any firm information on this. It was, of course, not obvious to our people visiting Jonestown that they had large numbers of firearms. There are laws in Guyana governing firearms. On the other hand, this is a pretty rugged area, and I think it is quite ordinary and certainly permitted for people to have weapons.

Q Including automatic weapons?

A I do not know what the situation is on automatic weapons, but certainly shot guns and weapons like that are widely held and are permitted. At least, those weapons were common as well. It has only been since people have gotten into the camp that they have identified perhaps the availability of, the presence there of automatic weapons, and even at that, I don't have any details on, although I have seen some reports indicating that there were automatic weapons there.

Q- Mr. Bushnell, can you tell me why yesterday you didn't ask the consular officer who made the visits in 1978 for his personal impressions of the 40 or 50 interviews he made in the field, given that you had complaints from relatives, and yet the inter-views revealed no complaints whatever -- why you felt it wasn't pertinent?

A I did ask him for his personal impressions, and he noted such things as that the colony had made a lot of progress, that they had built buildings, they had expanded, they seemed to be going ahead, that there seemed to be a lot of spirit in the colony. I think that those sorts of personal impressions he made and he had communicated in the official communications to Washington.

Q I mean the personal -- the people he interviewed. I don't mean his impressions of Jonestown; I mean the people that he interviewed. I presume he had a logical reason for interviewing the people that he did.

A Yes. As I said, he interviewed those people where, either we in the State Department or the Embassy had received letters with accusations that they were being abused or held against their will in some sort of situation which would be against the law, and that he tried to find out in direct, private contact with these people whether they confirmed that this was true, and in no case did any of them confirm that any of the accusations were true.

Q Did he say whether they appeared to be under the influence of --

Q Of what assistance was Mr. Lane to you, or Mr. Gerry, and also was there any special literature or anything of this sort found within the compound?

A I am not aware at this time of any literature. The consular officers in Georgetown did

talk with Mr. Lane and Mr. Gerry. What they told him is covered, I think, by the Privacy Act. I gather those individuals have talked with the press, and I think that you'll have to get their views from them. It's not my responsibility to pass on what they have given us in privileged communication.

Q Mr. Bushnell, is there any reason why we can't have the identity of the consular officers who carried this out, or were all the visits carried out by one consular officer?

A I believe that we have had three consular officers who have made visits at one time or another because of change of personnel and the fact that we have more than one consular officer there. I don't see any reason why we cannot give you that. Most of the consular visits in the first part of this year, the first half of this year, were made by Richard McCoy.

Is that the standard spelling? Does anyone know?

VOICE: M-c C-o-y.

A I think so. I do not know myself offhand who made the visit on 7 November. I would have to find that. It is one of the consular officers still assigned there.

Q That was the last one, 7 --

Q Was Mr. McCoy the one you talked to on the telephone, then?

A Mr. McCoy is the person that I talked to in person yesterday.

Q John, in view of your emphasis on the religious nature of this group, are you aware of the story in the New York Times yesterday which quoted Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Jim Jones, as saying her husband really didn't believe in religion, but he recognized that this could be used as a substitute to get people out of their superstition and other indications such as Jones' affinity for Cuba, his trip to Cuba, his promotion efforts to get officials in Washington to help Cuba; that this was, basically, not so much a religious movement but rather a political activity on his part under the guise of religion? Do you have any information on that?

A We do not have any information that he engaged in any activities which we would not put in a largely religious character except those that are proper. Just because a person is religious doesn't mean they cannot have political beliefs and activities as well.

Q But are you aware of Mrs. Jones' statement that he didn't believe in religion?

A I am not personally aware of that statement.

Q You didn't read the Times article on it?

A (Inaudible)

Q When your consular officers and the people in the State Department here, one, read the letter from the parents and then read the affidavit that was sent I believe in June of last year from the woman who had left the settlement -- she made an affidavit in San Francisco that was sent here -- was your conclusion based on those visits that there was just nothing to any of this? I mean, what was the posture of the State Department after investigating these things and looking at these things? Did they just feel that these people were wrong?

A That is, basically, the conclusion that we came to. As I said, the officers who visited were never able, from their own observations and investigation, to substantiate the kind of allegations that had been made and were impressed by the physical progress of the community in a short time. Nevertheless, they continued to be uneasy and concerned about the atmosphere they encountered, and by the recurrence of allegations about wrong-doing in the community.

To give you more information on this, we have talked also, the consular officer talked with people who had left the community, after they had left the community. Let me go over those couple of cases that we had. In one case, there was a person who left the community and went to the Guyanese police at Matthews Ridge, which is about 20 miles from the community. The consular officer there went to Matthews Ridget to interview this person together with the Guyanese police officer.

Initially, the individual complained to Guyanese authorities that he had been forced to do hard labor. When interviewed subsequently by the U.S. and

Guyanese authorities, however, he denied this and said he only wanted the Peoples Temple to repatriate him to California. The consular officer passed the request to the Peoples Temple; the Peoples Temple agreed to repatriate the individual to the United States; the Guyanese immigration service officials confirmed that he departed shortly thereafter.

There was another person who left the sect, one person who had been resident in Georgetown. As you know, they had an office in Georgetown -- still do, I guess, as well as the up-country one; she told the Embassy she wished to return to the United States, but the Peoples Temple was holding her passport. The Embassy issued her a new passport and assisted her in making arrangements to leave. An Embassy officer who happened to be traveling on the same flight accompanied her out of the country. So even with people who were already leaving, we did not get any confirmation of the sort of allegations that we were getting in the mail.

And you also recall that we were getting a lot of saying these allegations were not true.

Q On this second one that you just referred to -- I don't know if you read the Post this morning, but it re-publishes an affidavit from a woman in which she makes a large number of very specific allegations of abuse and also I believe thanks Richard McCoy for his assistance, but she did not repeat any of these allegations to him --

A She did not.

Q --at the time?

A At the time.

Q Just to clarify one thing: Did you ever ask McCoy whether he ever specifically asked these people whether they were being terrorized in any way?

A What he said is that when he was out in the field with these people, he would ask them about whatever the accusation was that we had received on the individual. I mean the accusations have varied. We have received a lot of mail. Some argue that they are not being allowed to leave or that they are being abused in one way or another. He would ask them, I dare say, that there had been a report or a letter or someone was complaining that this person was abused in that way, whatever way it was, and in every case they said it was not true.

Q Mr. Bushnell, did McCoy ever file any reports to Washington other than the specifics of these interviews? Any overall impressions giving an assessment of how he viewed the settlement, positively or negatively?

A I am not aware of any general assessment of that. I think he did send reports back on his visits. Whether that would be a general assessment or not, I don't know just how you would characterize it.

Q In view of the fact that Congressman Ryan's delegation is reported to have had a rather favorable first impression of the Jonestown settlement, is it considered likely, probable, or possible here that the oppressive conditions, let me say, could have been hidden from your consular officers?

A I would have to say that in view of the subsequent events which have now happened, it is obvious that they did not know of everything that was going on in that community. I would say that consular officers around the world certainly do not know everything that is going on in most communities around the world. All that we can do is to make the best efforts of trying to find if there are violations of the rights of Americans and laws that are being violated. The Consular Service of the United States is not inherently an investigative organization.

Q Might I follow that?

A One more here.

Q There are reports also that some people were being held there in what was described as deplorable living conditions in one specific hut or building. Do you have any information about that at all?

A This was a new colony out in the jungle. The living conditions were rugged and severe. I think there is no question about that. From the visits of the consular officers, he did not find anything inconsistent with that.

Q I mean since the atrocities have occurred.

A Our limited communication has not made it possible for us to go into that sort of detail what the facilities were.

Q Mr. Bushnell, one last question: Yesterday in the briefing, the transcript yesterday, has reference to one of the letters you got from parents, I believe it was, that referred to information about a reported suicide pact; and you said, "Well, I didn't notice that." I would ask, first of all, have you notice it in rereading it? And secondly, why does the State Department refer to this in the transcript as the "Guyana incident?" Doesn't it seem to be more than incidental?

MR. CARTER: The transcript also reveals the word "murder;" it reveals a number of other things. That word was used once, and we referred to it rather graphically in that transcript. There is a great deal more than that.

Q Right. What about the suicide pact, Hodding?

A MR. CARTER: I think there were, in fact, suggestions in some letters that such a thing was there. Let me say one other thing about the letters because I asked just to get a record on this. We received, roughly, 1200 letters on the subject of the Peoples Temple. Of that number, somewhere around 60 to 70 percent were favorable -- 60 to 70 percent. Now let me tell you more about the way our letters come in because --

Q How much?

MR. CARTER: Sixty to seventy percent. I want to tell you something about letters on subjects like this. I think some of you sitting out here know how they are done. We get a lot of campaign mail, mimeographed, all saying the same thing, all suggesting things that have been inspired by somebody else. A great deal of the letters that came in the category of supportive were in that variety. A number of the letters, the largest single mass of letters that we got, which were speaking in ways which were antagonistic, suggesting these terrible things were happening, concerned one particular family situation involving a child -- and I don't know how far I really can go on this one -- which, in fact, went forward with some legal action taken by the family in the attempt to have the child returned. Some of that mail was also campaign mail on behalf of that family. There were legal steps taken.

Not all of the supportive letters were campaign mail; that is, they were the ones written from people saying, "Why is it you won't release all the good things about this wonderful place that is being persecuted?" Similarly, there were letters that came out in the minority suggesting the bad things.

Q Hodding, if I could follow up --

Q So how does that compare with the mail you get on the Middle East or any other major subject?

MR. CARTER: I will tell you that.

Sue?

MISS HAUFE: From January through August of this year -- primarily, March through June.

MR. CARTER: How do you compare that, say, to campaign or other mail on a subject such as the Middle East, those 1200 letters?

MISS HAUFE: It was a little heavier than the mail on the Middle East during that period.

MR. CARTER: In that period.

MISS HAUFE: Yes.

Q Was there any subject which received more correspondence in that time period?

MISS HAUFE: I don't believe so.

MR. CARTER: Sue, you might want to check that.

MISS HAUFE: I will check that.

MR. CARTER: Because it seems to me I can recall getting, for instance 280 letters in a week about human rights conditions in Nicaragua. Whether that is sustained or not, you know, I think we would have to -- January through August was the period.

Q Hodding, it was well known on the Pacific Coast that Jones, by ordering his troops, his flock, could produce up to 500 letters a night. When I went to the Peoples Temple in 1972 I got 125 letters in three days and they were delivered by officers of Mendocino County. How can you, therefore, put any credence in these favorable letters to Jones, seeing that they were engineered by Jones himself?

A Les, I understand there are a number of politicians that are very responsive to campaign mail on subjects ranging from the Panama Canal treaties which are engineered and very well orchestrated, right on through, and are form letters which are produced by very well-financed operations which are in business just for that. That is a fairly normal --

Q But nobody died. There aren't 400 bodies as a result of the Panama Canal treaties.

A It is a fairly normal procedure in America today utilized by a number of people, and I think you know a lot of them very well.

(The Guyana briefing concluded at appoximately 12:45)